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About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

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James Brown: An "American Original"

Americans awoke on Christmas morning to learn that one of their cultural icons was gone. Pioneering musician James Brown, the inventor of funk music, passed away at 73 on December 25. Brown changed the way music is looked at. His innovations marked the beginning of funk music and current rhythm and blues and rap. James Brown "will always be a legend," fellow musician Chuck Brown said. "He's just going to be around forever. It doesn't seem to me that he's gone.", President Bush praised Brown as an "American original," who "enriched our culture and influenced generations of musicians."

A Detail-Oriented Band Leader

Icon or not, James Brown was known as "the hardest working man in show business." Lisa White, booking manager at Washington's 9:30 Club, recalled "a very detail-oriented person" who, well after achieving international fame, continued to take an active role in his band. She remembered standing behind the club's soundboard while the band was going through its sound check for that night's performance. "A lot of people that achieve that stature in their career, they don't bother to come to sound check ... but not James Brown. He was like the conductor rehearsing everybody through their different parts and making them go over it ... until they got it right and calling people out for stuff that they weren't doing or that they should have done. [I]t just impressed me how much he still cared about making sure that the performance he was going to give the people who bought the tickets to the show was going to be the best it could be," White said.

Brown, in his quest for excellence, was well-known for fining band members to punish poor performance. Musician Chuck Brown, 72, the "Godfather of Go-Go," who shared the stage several times with the "Godfather of Soul" remembers seeing James Brown on stage when someone made a mistake. "He'd just raise his fingers. He'd raise two fingers. That means that's what you got, a \$200 fine, you know? He was very strict." But that band was "the tightest band in the world as far as I'm concerned."

A Legendary Performer With A Mission

Brown performed all over the world, in Europe, Indonesia, Malaysia, the French Caribbean, China, and New Zealand, to name a few. His concerts "were almost like a combination of World Wrestling Federation [matches] and a Baptist church ceremony," his tour manager Todd Harris said. "He'd always stop the show and tell everybody in the audience to turn to the person on their left and say hello and 'tell them that you love them,' and do the same thing on the right. He'd always bring a little piece of America to these different areas," Harris said. James Brown saw himself as an American cultural ambassador with a mission. "It was much bigger than the music. And he'd stop and mention that to you. He'd always stop and tell people, 'this is bigger than you think. This is George Bush, this is politics, this is everything right here.'" After tragic events such as the Asian tsunami or Hurricane Katrina, Brown routinely would stop the show in the middle to have a 30-second moment of silence.



The legendary James Brown sings "Living in America" at the Wilton Theater in Los Angeles, June 10, 1991. (© AP Images)



Singers James Brown and Aretha Franklin perform at the Taboo night club in Detroit, January 11, 1987. (© AP Images)

Brown's final concert in Washington at the 9:30 Club on December 28, 2005, with Chuck Brown opening the show, can be heard courtesy of National Public Radio's All Songs Considered.

[James Brown in Concert](#)

More about James Brown:
[The Godfather of Soul](#)

More about music in the U.S.:
[About the USA > Music](#)

The Night James Brown saved a City in the Wake of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Assassination



James Brown performing during his televised concert at Boston Garden the day after Martin Luther King Jr. was killed. (© GLOBE FILE/1968)

“Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud”

James Brown was also a hero to many fellow African Americans, one of his most famous songs being “Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud.” “He gave [African Americans] a lot of confidence in themselves,” musician Chuck Brown said. Tour manager Harris recalled James Brown’s efforts to keep peace in the wake of the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, when riots were breaking out in major U.S. cities.

On April 5, 1968, James Brown played the Boston Garden—less than 24 hours after the assassination of Martin Luther King. Other cities were already aflame, and only 2,000 people gathered in an arena that held 14,000. Mayor Kevin White prepared for the worst and urged the audience to “honor Dr. King in peace,” but it was Brown who prevented a riot: when fans rushed the stage, he called off the uniformed police and talked everybody back to their seats. Brown asked that his concert that night in Boston be broadcast over the television networks “so that it would help curb some of the violence if everybody stayed home that night and watched him” instead of taking their anger to the streets. It worked. Boston was the only major U.S. city that did not have riots that night.

January 15, 2007 - Martin Luther King Day

On the third Monday of each January, Americans honor the life and achievements of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., (1929–1968), the 1964 Nobel Peace laureate and the individual most associated with the triumphs of the African-American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s.

Read more:

usa.usembassy.de/holidays-mlking.htm



The Nobel Peace Prize 1964

Acceptance Speech at Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony in Oslo - December 10, 1964
[Transcript](#)

Presentation Speech by Gunnar Jahn, Chairman of the Nobel Committee
[Transcript](#)

*“Our lives begin to
end the day we
become silent about
things that matter.”*

Speeches

“I Have A Dream” Speech – [Transcript and audio](#)

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom – August 28, 1963

“Beyond Vietnam” - [Transcript](#)

Address delivered to the clergy and laymen concerned about Vietnam, at the Riverside Church - April 4, 1967

“I’ve Been To The Mountaintop” - [Transcript](#)

King’s last speech, Memphis, Tennessee - April 3, 1968

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Washington D.C.

Official website for the Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial that will be located on a “four-acre plot on the north east corner of the Tidal Basin within the precinct of the Jefferson Memorial and north of the memorial to President Roosevelt” in Washington, D.C. It features maps, a description of landscape elements, news, brief background about Dr. King, and photos from the commemorative groundbreaking held on November 13, 2006.

www.mlkmemorial.org/

Why Build a Memorial to Dr. King?

More than a monument to a great humanitarian, the National Memorial honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be a place for visitors from all over the world to be energized by its extraordinary power; the power that illuminated the faith of our founders and now impels us toward our destiny as a nation; the power flowing from the uniquely American spirit of brotherly love, freedom, justice, and the priceless blessing they endure...peace.

2006 Word of the Year: "Carbon Neutral"

The English language evolves and changes with the times. On November 13, the editors of *The New Oxford American Dictionary* unveiled the 2006 word of the year: "carbon neutral." As a tip of the hat to the growing scientific, cultural and political awareness of global warming, the New Oxford American Dictionary will add the ecological adjective "carbon neutral" to its most recent edition.

Being carbon neutral involves calculating your total climate-damaging carbon emissions, reducing them where possible, and then balancing your remaining emissions, often by purchasing a carbon offset: paying to plant new trees or investing in "green" technologies such as solar and wind power.

Source: blog.oup.com/oupblog/2006/11/what_do_al_gore.html

Examples of "carbon neutral" events include the 2006 Winter Olympics, the World Cup and the Super Bowl. These major sports events all went "carbon neutral" by planting thousands of trees and investing in alternative energy projects. Individuals can go "carbon neutral" by neutralizing their travel emissions and Bands like the Rolling Stones and Coldplay have made their tours carbon neutral.

Read more:

- [Carbon Neutral Shopping Guide](#) (Boston Globe)
- [A Consumer' Guide to Becoming Carbon Neutral](#) (Yahoo News)
- [Carbon Offset](#) (Wikipedia Encyclopedia)
- [How to go Carbon Neutral](#) (David Suzuki Foundation)
- [Green Power and Renewable Energy](#) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - EPA)
- [Reducing the Threat of Climate Change](#) (The Carbon Fund Calculator)

The United States & the European Union

In the light of Germany's EU presidency, the U.S. Embassy has created a website to highlight the ongoing cooperation on the shared priorities of the the United States and the European Union. Included on the website is a list of milestones that illustrate the history of the transatlantic partnership the two partners.

Building the Transatlantic Partnership – Milestones

germany.usembassy.de/eu_presidency/milestones.htm

August 1, 1975

The Heads of State or Government of 35 nations gathered in Helsinki to sign the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The CSCE evolved into the OSCE, the only Eurasian security body in which all the states in the Euro-Atlantic region, Central Asia and the Caucasus sit at the same table as equal partners. This broad membership of 56 nations provides the OSCE with the opportunity to build overarching commitments on standards and values to prevent new divisions within Europe and beyond. Among the leaders who gathered in Helsinki was recently deceased former President Gerald R. Ford.

Thirty years later, President Ford recalled, "At the signing of the Helsinki Final Act thirty years ago, I said that history would judge this conference not by the promises we made that day, but by the promises we kept. Europe and the world have witnessed tremendous changes in the last thirty years. Those original thirty-five signatories now number fifty-five. And we have seen an expansion of liberty throughout the region and the globe that was unimaginable when we signed this Final Act."

Read more:

OSCE, 30 Years, 30 Opinions (OSCE)

www.osce.org/anniversary/30/opinion.12.html

Recapturing the Spirit of Helsinki

www.osce.org/publications/sq/2005/10/16724_466_en.pdf

Runners-up for the 2006 Word of the Year include:

CSA (community-supported agriculture)

DRM (digital rights management)

dwarf planet (a new designation for planetlike objects)

elbow bump (a greeting in which two people touch elbows)

fishapod (a humorous name for a newly discovered fossil: Tiktaalik roseae)

ghostriding (the practice of exiting a moving vehicle)

Islamofascism (a controversial term equating some modern Islamic movements with the European fascist movements of the early twentieth century.)

pregaming (the practice of consuming alcoholic beverages before attending a sporting event or party)

LINK:

[EPA List of Emission Calculators](#)



Official Website of the German Presidency of the EU



From left, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, GDR leader Erich Honecker and President Gerald R. Ford were among 35 state leaders gathered here for the signing of the final act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe on August 1, 1975. (© BPA)

2007 STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES

United States Census Bureau. Released December 2006
<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract.html>

This annual compendium of data is the single most useful statistical source for data on the United States. The Table of Contents page allows one to browse the publication section-by-section, including the sections on basic population data, income, trade, energy, arts and elections. The page cited above allows one to search the 2007 edition as well as past editions.

Interesting projections:

- Adults and teens will spend nearly five months (3,518 hours) next year watching television, surfing the Internet, reading daily newspapers and listening to personal music devices. According to projections from a communications industry forecast (Table 1110), people will spend 65 days in front of the TV, 41 days listening to radio and a little over a week on the Internet in 2007. Adults will spend about a week reading a daily newspaper and teens and adults will spend another week listening to recorded music. Consumer spending for media is forecasted to be \$936.75 per person.
- U.S. consumers are projected to spend \$55.5 billion to purchase 3.17 billion books in 2007

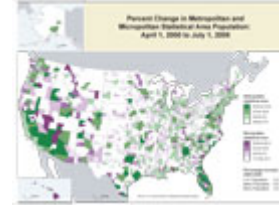
U.S. Census Bureau News -

Census Bureau Projects Population of 300.9 Million on New Year's Day

The U.S. Census Bureau projected the Jan. 1, 2007, population will be 300,888,812 — up 2,863,990 or 1 percent from New Year's Day 2006.

[Link](#)

Population Estimates



[Link](#)

U.S. and World Population Clocks

[Link](#)

InfoAlert - For More on Trends and Current Events in the United States

infoalert.usembassy.de

InfoAlert highlights recent articles and reports from leading U.S. journals and provides informed commentary on international and domestic issues.

ALERT – ALERT-ALERT-ALERT-ALERT-ALERT-ALERT
Upcoming programs at Amerika Haus:
<http://www.amerikahaus.de/programm.html>

Webchat Station

Webchat: Native Deen: Celebrating Islam and Promoting Tolerance Through Hip-Hop

February 1, 2007, 16:00

[Register/Enter Chat](#)

Founded in 2000, the American hip-hop group Native Deen has become known for its positive energy, traditional percussions, and lyrics focused on the topics of tolerance and the teachings of Islam. The group is composed of Muslim-American hip-hop artists Joshua Salaamis, Abdul-Malik Ahmad and Naeem Muhammad, who together have performed in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa.



usa.usembassy.de

About the USA is a digital collection of background resources on American society, culture, and political processes. In addition to featuring selected websites, it provides access to documents in full text format (E-Texts) on topics ranging from the history of German-American relations, government and politics to travel, holidays and sports.

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For information about this and other information products and services, see:

<http://munich.usconsulate.gov>

Contact: IRCmunich@state.gov